

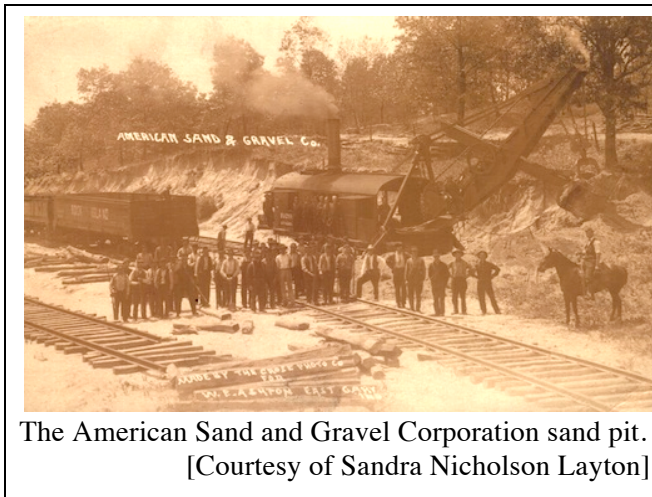
## Chapter 4

### Major Sand Mining Companies



Many companies mined, bought, and sold Indiana dune sand. Some were mammoth corporations; others were small and family-owned. Some have been in existence for more than 100 years, others for much shorter periods, closing either because they were unprofitable or purchased by larger corporations. Many companies dealt with both ice and sand. Workers cut ice when lakes were frozen and mined sand when they weren't. The ice business declined after World War I with the advent of home refrigerators, but the sand mining business still flourishes.

**Aetna Superior Sand Company**, with offices in Chicago at 11 South LaSalle Street, was mining in Miller in the 1950s and selling to various foundries.<sup>1</sup>



The American Sand and Gravel Corporation sand pit.  
[Courtesy of Sandra Nicholson Layton]

**American Sand and Gravel** in 1910 was listed in *Industrial World*<sup>2</sup> as having a new charter. In 1926 it owned and mined 80 acres of land in eastern Miller. In 1917, Napoleon C. Fisher, president of this company was also the secretary-treasurer of the Garden City Sand Company.

**Artesian Sand and Gravel Company** was organized March 1, 1890 and was the next year described in *Industrial Chicago: The Building Interests* as one of the leading firms of its kind in the

city. It claimed to sell a superior grade of Indiana bank sand claiming its product was coarser and cleaner than “has before been brought to this market.”<sup>3</sup>

**John Bos Sand Company** was a Chicago-based business, formed before 1914<sup>4</sup>, that did considerable business in Lake and western Porter Counties in the mid-twentieth century.

**Brown Trucking Company**, now known as Bulk Transport Corp., was a locally-owned company that in the 1950s-80s had pits south of U.S. Rt. 20 in Pine Township.<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Bieber's field notes, 1950, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Industrial World*, 1910, p. 300.

<sup>3</sup> *Industrial Chicago: The building Interests*, 1891, p. 787-788

<sup>4</sup> Stevenson, 1915, p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> Bieber's field notes, 1950, p. 43 / Cole, 1986, p. 35-36

company has conducted site preparation work in many locations including the Port of Indiana area, Marquette Mall, and many subdivisions and schools.

**Castle Sand Company** in 1906 owned about 90 acres of land in eastern Miller just south of the B&O Railroad.

**Chicago Mutual Sand and Gravel Company** was licensed in 1893<sup>6</sup> and two years later owned 320 acres of lakefront land in Portage Township. By 1906 that land was owned by Charles Shedd, director and treasurer of the Knickerbocker Ice Company.

**Crisman Sand Company** was created in the 1920s by the merger of mining operations by the Nicholson family (upon whose land the sand was first quarried) and the neighboring Scofield operations. Both had the only sand in the area suitable for lining troughs for molten iron and thus supplied all the local steel mills.<sup>7</sup> About 1990 the company moved its headquarters to Valparaiso. In 2015, this locally-owned company is still in operation, mining property it owns in Porter County's Jackson Township.



A Crisman Sand Company crane. Circa 1924.

[Courtesy of Sandra Nicholson Layton]

**Construction Aggregates Corporation** in 1950 had offices at 33 North LaSalle Street in Chicago and was mining in west Aetna. Many of its customers were in Illinois (e.g. Champaign, Geneva, Joliet, Waukegan), but at least one was as distant as Alabama.<sup>8</sup> The company also had a sand sucker boat that operated in Lake Michigan.<sup>9</sup>

**Consumers Company** at 111 West Washington Street, Chicago, was incorporated in Illinois in 1913, a consolidation in February of that year of Knickerbocker Ice Company and City Fuel Company, both Illinois corporations. Chairman of the Board in 1918 was J. S. Field.<sup>10</sup> It operated at Dune Park until it sold its land to Bethlehem Steel Company.

**Garden City Sand and Gravel Company** in 1906 owned 160 acres of land east of Miller Cemetery aside the B&O Railroad.<sup>11</sup> The company was established in 1883<sup>12</sup> and claimed to be the first mining company to ship sand to Chicago by rail. If so, then the shipping of sand, described in 1882 in Goodspeed and Blanchard's *Counties of Porter and Lake*,<sup>13</sup> must have been carted by horse-drawn wagons, an unlikely means of transport because the trains had connected Porter County with Chicago thirty years earlier.<sup>14</sup> The company was involved in a

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<sup>6</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 30, 1893, page 6.

<sup>7</sup> Magurean, December, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Bieber's field notes, 1950, p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> S., J. *Outdoor Indiana*, October 1948, p. 14-15.

<sup>10</sup> *Fitzgerald* 1918, p. 332.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, 1906 map.

<sup>12</sup> *Concrete*, 1918,, p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Garard, 1882, p. 214.

<sup>14</sup> *Industrial Chicago: The Building Interests*, 1891, p. 784-786.

law suit concerning its mining near Gary in 1908. Napoleon Fisher, treasurer of this company was, at his death in 1917, also the president of American Sand and Gravel Company.<sup>15</sup>

**Hoosier Slide Sand Company**, incorporated in 1906 in Michigan City by William Manny but managed by his son Carter after 1912. It was evidently the largest of the three sand companies operating in the northwest part of that city. It claimed to be the first firm to purchase a locomotive crane to load the sand.<sup>16</sup> When the dune was gone, the company sold its land to the Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO).



A Hoosier Slide Sand Company postcard, circa 1905.

[Old Lighthouse Museum]

**Inland Steel Company** purchased Frances Ogden's Porter County lakefront property in 1920,<sup>17</sup> later selling much of the eastern portion to the syndicate that then created the Ogden Dunes development.

Although its Porter County lands had already been mined, Inland did continue, or at least resume sand mining of that area. Possibly, some of the sand was used for its own lake fill when Inland expanded its East Chicago plant peninsula in the 1960s. The photo to the right shows trucks on the new fill area loaded with sand apparently ready to dump their loads.



Looking northwest showing Inland's fill area, January 11, 1965.

[Inland Steel collection, CRA]

**Knickerbocker Ice Company of Chicago** was incorporated in 1885 by Edward A. Shedd, the founder earlier of E. A. Shedd & Co. Both companies dealt in both harvesting ice and mining sand.<sup>18</sup> Except for the Missouri Valley Dredging Company (that cleared the Central Dunes for Bethlehem Steel Company) Knickerbocker probably mined more Duneland sand than any other company. It owned more than 2,000 acres of land in northwest Indiana, five steam shovels, and 200 gondola cars. Officers in 1886 included E. A. Shedd, president; J. S. Field, vice-president; and C. B. Shedd, secretary and treasurer. Field was president in 1909. (According to *Industrial Chicago: The Building Interests*, published in 1891, the

<sup>15</sup> *Concrete*, 1918, p. 114.

<sup>16</sup> Boomhower, 1993, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Gentz, 1966.

<sup>18</sup> Harrison, 1904, p. 202.



Knickerbocker Ice Company's mammoth icehouses on Wolf Lake were the largest in the world.<sup>19</sup>) In July 1903, Knickerbocker acquired the Consumers Company (see above) owned then by Michigan City entrepreneur Chauncey J. Blair.

***The Indianapolis News, May 6, 1908, page 13:***

The Federal Government is investigating the charge that the Knickerbocker Ice Company, of Chicago, and the Indiana Harbor Railway Company have been violating interstate commerce laws by collusion, in controlling the sand lands along Lake Michigan, thereby fixing the price to Chicago contractors .... The general manager of the Indiana Harbor Railway, admitted on the witness stand ... that his railway ... had furnished cars to the Knickerbocker Ice Company free of charge in the transportation of sand. He also admitted that John S. Field, president of the Knickerbocker Ice Company, was a director of the Indiana Harbor Railway.

**Krug Sand Company** was listed as a new Chicago corporation in 1896-97<sup>20</sup> and was still in business at least until 1931.<sup>21</sup> In the early twentieth century, it owned land in eastern Miller, just west of the Porter County Line. *The Inter Ocean* (newspaper) on January 1, 1904, noted that Mr. Krug was president of the Krug Sand Company, described as "one of the largest in its line in Chicago."<sup>22</sup>



Two cyclists in front of a Krug Sand Company rail car operating out of Millers Station. Circa 1900. [Miller Collection, CRA]



S. Krug, 1904 lithograph possibly by L.A. Searle

**Lake Shore Sand Company** from at least 1895-1906 owned 40 acres of land in Porter County.

**Manley Sand Company**, with an office in Gary, was owned (at least in 1950) by the Knickerbocker Ice Company.<sup>23</sup> It had operations in Miller, Dune Park, and east of Michigan City.

**Missouri Valley Dredging Company** in 1962 contracted with Bethlehem Steel Company to remove the Central Sand Dunes from its property so that Bethlehem could build its mills.

<sup>19</sup> *Industrial Chicago: The Building Interests*, 1891, p. 786-87.

<sup>20</sup> Moses, 1897.

<sup>21</sup> *The Vidette-Messenger*, Thursday, April 9, 1931, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Bar Association (Chicago) Record*. Vol. 1, number 4. April, 1919.

<sup>23</sup> Bieber field notes, 1950, p. 26.

**Pinkston Sand Company**, of Michigan City, was one of the mining companies that removed sand from the Hoosier Slide.<sup>24</sup> (It is listed in the *1919 Yearbook of the State of Indiana*.<sup>25</sup>) When the dune was gone, the company sold its land to NIPSCO.<sup>26</sup>



Right: A portion of a Pinkston advertising flyer.  
[Old Lighthouse Museum]

**Producers Core Sand Corporation**, located in Michigan City, was incorporated in 1926. According to the *Michigan City News-Dispatch*, it was the “outgrowth” of a number of earlier sand companies including the Hoosier Slide Sand Company.<sup>27</sup> In 1952, it was mining on both the west and east sides of Michigan City.<sup>28</sup>

**E. A. Shedd & Company**, one of many ice-harvesting companies in the Chicago area was founded in 1874 by Edward A. Shedd. The company grew, eventually owning huge ice storage houses. The ones next to Wolf Lake, were said to be the largest in the world. In January 1885, it became the Knickerbocker Ice Company with 200 summer employees and many more in the winter.<sup>29</sup>

**Silica Sand Company** of Michigan City, Indiana. (listed in the *1919 Yearbook of the State of Indiana*, page 203 as having an office in the county.)<sup>30</sup>

**S. J. Taylor Sand Company** of Michigan City in the 1920s had a spur line from the South Shore tracks to its sand mining operation east of Mount Baldy and west of where the Hoosier Slide mining occurred.<sup>31</sup> Samuel J. Taylor, was earlier president of the Pinkston Sand Company

<sup>24</sup> Boomhower, 1993, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Kettleborough, 1919, p. 203.

<sup>26</sup> Boomhower, 1993, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> *News-Dispatch*, September 13, 1950, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> Bieber and Smith (enclosed map), 1952.

<sup>29</sup> Currey, 1918, p. 193.

<sup>30</sup> Goodrich, 1919, p. 203.

<sup>31</sup> Nicewarner, 1980, p. 267.



Railcars waiting to be loaded by S. J. Taylor Company staff [Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore]

**M. Walsh** started in the sand and gravel business in 1880. In 1891 his business was modestly said to supply sand and gravel “of the very best quality, exceptionally free from foreign substances.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Industrial Chicago: The building Interests*, 1891, p. 784

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### Sand Sucking Companies

Sand suckers were boats (or barges) that carried equipment so that they could moor off shore and suck up sand from the lake bottom. In 1913 an editor of the Gary Evening Post complained that sandsuckers were “stealing the bottom of the lake.”<sup>33</sup>

Two Duneland area shipwrecks, the *Muskegon* and the *J. D. Marshall* were sand suckers.

Eventually the Indiana state government realized that lake bottom sand was valuable, and so began requiring permits and payments in order to legally to suck Lake Michigan sand.



A sand sucker off the coast of Ogden Dunes.

[Courtesy of Sandra Nicholson Layton]

The three Chicago companies listed below owned sand suckers that mid-century legally sucked up sand from the bottom of Lake Michigan. In 1948 all three received a permit from the Indiana Department of Conservation to do so. Royalties were also paid to the state for the amount “harvested.” The sand was then taken to Material Service yards where it was stored until needed. In 1948 much of the sand went to Chicago for the Lake fill project that created (or enlarged) Northerly Island so that Meigs Field could be built there. Three of these companies, all at least operating in the 1940s, were:<sup>34</sup>

Construction Aggregates Company

Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company

Hanna Transportation Company

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<sup>33</sup> *Gary Evening Post*, December, 27, 1913, in Moore, 1959, p. 101.

<sup>34</sup> S., J. *Outdoor Indiana*, October 1948, p. 14-15.

## Major and Typical Customers

**Chandler-Taylor Company** Indianapolis foundry used Michigan City sand in making cores.<sup>35</sup>

**City of Chicago:** Large amounts of sand went to:

- The site of the Chicago World's Fair, the Columbian Exposition of 1893, which was filled in with sand from just east of Miller.<sup>36</sup>
- Jackson Park and Northerly Island (Meigs Field) received sand from northwest Indiana.<sup>37</sup>
- Railroads (see below) and construction businesses in Chicago also purchased large amounts of Indiana dune sand.

**Glass companies:**<sup>38</sup>

**Ball Brothers Glass Company** of Muncie. Starting in 1912, Ball used sand from the Hoosier Slide sand dune in Michigan City until the dune was leveled.

**Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company** of Kokomo.

**Hemingray Glass Company**, Muncie, for glass insulators for telegraph and telephone poles.

**East Gary Concrete Products Company** purchased Michigan City area sand from the Brown Trucking Company.

**Hartong and Company** at Pike Street and Central Avenue in East Gary was a drying plant. Its sand was an ingredient of patching asphalt.

**Josam Manufacturing Company**, described in 1967 as one of the largest foundries in the Michigan City area, had two main furnaces for melting metal.<sup>39</sup> It used Duneland sand for molding ferrous materials, which in the summer arrived by truck; in winter Josam purchased dried sand from Manley. (Brass materials needed a finer sand imported from Tennessee.<sup>40</sup>)

**Northwestern University:** The 1963 campus expansion into Lake Michigan used sand that was removed by Bethlehem Steel Company from the Central Dunes<sup>41</sup>

**Railroads:** Rail lines needed to be as level as possible and, in low places, made high enough so that they weren't covered by water during floods. Many Chicago and northwest Indiana railroad lines were raised using Indiana Dunes sand. For instance:

**Santa Fe Railroad:** Powell Moore noted that in 1889 the Santa Fe Railroad placed an order for 150,000 cars of dune sand, which was obtained from the Miller area<sup>42</sup>

**Illinois Central Railroad** for its elevated track in Cook County<sup>43</sup>

**Chicago and Northwestern Railroad** in 1902 purchased 8000 carloads a month for three months from Knickerbocker to be used in elevating its tracks on the Mayfair division.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Barrett, 1914, page 49.

<sup>36</sup> Moore, 1959, p. 100.

<sup>37</sup> Minnetrista, "Hoosier Slide," *Outdoor Indiana*, October, 1952, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Minnetrista, "Hoosier Slide"

<sup>39</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, August 20, 1967.

<sup>40</sup> Bieber field notes, July 19, 1950, p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Engle, 1983, p. 270.

<sup>42</sup> Moore, 1959, p. 101.

<sup>43</sup> Minnetrista, *Hoosier Slide*

<sup>44</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 23, 1902



**Steel Mills:** Mills such as U.S. and Inland needed Crisman-area sand for lining troughs for molten iron.